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JAISHANKAR FLAGS INDIA'S CONCERNS OVER VIOLENCE TO MYANMAR DY PM

The external affairs minister on Wednesday conveyed India's 'deep concerns' over the impact of violence in Myanmar on the Indian border

FIRST ENGAGEMENT WITH SENIOR JUNTA LEADER

Jaishankar's meeting with Myanmar's Deputy Prime Minister U Than Shwe in New Delhi is the government's first publicly acknowledged engagement with a senior leader of the Myanmar military junta in India. Jaishankar told Shwe that the continuing violence in Myanmar has led to a rise in illegal arms and narcotics arriving at the Indian border

SECURITY SOUGHT FOR INDIAN PROJECTS

- Jaishankar sought cooperation for the early return of about 100 Indians trapped in Myanmar's Myawaddy town. Most of them fell prey to an international racket promising jobs in Myanmar
- The minister also said he had pressed for credible security protection for India's various ongoing projects in the strife-torn country

1,640 km

IS THE LENGTH OF INDIA'S BORDER WITH MYANMAR

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Birla stays in LS Speaker's saddle

Second presiding officer to get two terms; elected by voice vote

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

NATIONAL Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate Om Birla was on Wednesday elected Lok Sabha Speaker for the second consecutive term after a motion moved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was adopted through voice vote.

The Speaker election for the 18th Lok Sabha was keenly watched as it witnessed a rare contest between Birla and the Opposition INDIA bloc's candidate Kodikunnil Suresh after both sides failed to arrive at a consensus.

Birla became the only presiding officer to serve two terms after Bairam Jakhar. Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab made the announcement after the Opposition did not press for division of votes to the motion. While elections to the Speaker's post were common before Independence, the position witnessed contests only thrice in Independent India — in 1952, 1967 and 1976.

Three-term BJP MP Birla represents Kota in the Lok Sabha. NDA allies Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Jitan Ram Manjhi (HAM-S), Prataprao Jadhav (Shiv Sena) and Chirag Paswan (LJP-RV) also moved motions in Birla's favour.

Shiv Sena (UBT) member Arvind Sawant moved the motion to elect Congress' Suresh to the post. After the voice vote, Mahtab announced that all other motions, barring the prime minister's, became infructuous. Birla's election was a foregone conclusion as the NDA has 293 members as against the INDIA bloc's 237 in the Lok Sabha.

Congratulating Birla on his re-election, Modi expressed confidence that he will guide parliamentarians and play a big role in the House in fulfilling people's expectations.

In his speech, Birla said that in the last decade, the expectations, hopes and aspirations of the people have increased. "Therefore, it becomes our responsibility to make collective efforts to fulfil their expectations and aspirations effectively. The 18th Lok Sabha is the world's largest celebration of democracy. More than 64 crore voters participated with great enthusiasm. On behalf of the House, I express my gratitude to them," he said.

Video grab of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi in a rare handshake before escorting Om Birla to the Speaker's chair, in New Delhi on Wednesday | PTI

SHARP STATEMENT

"The nation turned into a prison... Emergency brought with it anti-social and dictatorial policies that destroyed the lives of the poor, the Dalits and the deprived," Speaker Om Birla said

Massive Oppn protest after Chair's Emergency rap

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

SOON after his election as Speaker, Om Birla on Wednesday sparked a row by reading out a resolution condemning the imposition of Emergency as an attack on the Constitution by former prime minister Indira Gandhi, triggering massive protests by the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

"This House strongly condemns the decision to impose Emergency in 1975. We appreciate the determination of all those who opposed Emergency, fought and fulfilled the responsibility of protecting democracy. 25th June 1975 will always be known as a black chapter in the history of India," he said. The House was adjourned after chaotic scenes of protests and sloganeering by the Opposition.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the Speaker's reference to Emergency. "The happenings during the Emergency exemplified what a dictatorship looks like," Modi said.

For his part, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said, "What we saw was the Speaker unfortunately raising a matter that had not been discussed in the House and in a manner that came across as confrontational."

5G spectrum auction fetches just 12% of targeted revenue

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

THE Central government's second 5G spectrum action on Wednesday saw subdued bidding by telecom companies, which collectively bid ₹11,340 crore for a total 141.4 MHz of airwaves. The bid value amounts to just 12% of the reserve price of ₹96,238 crore. The auction concluded in two days with seven rounds of bidding.

Bharti Airtel emerged the top bidder by acquiring airwaves worth ₹6,856.76 crore, followed by Vodafone Idea at ₹3,510 crore. India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio had deposited the highest earnest money of ₹3,000 crore but it bid only ₹973.62 crore to pick up additional spectrum.

In the previous 5G spectrum auction held in August 2022, the government had fetched a record ₹1.5 lakh crore. The lukewarm response this time is attributed to the fact that most telecom service providers (TSPs), except Reliance Jio, participated in the auction mostly to renew their expired spectrums.

LUKEWARM RESPONSE

This year's auction included spectrum across various bands — 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300 MHz, and 26 GHz. However, telcos showed interest only in 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, and 2500 MHz bands

Bharti Airtel, led by Sunil Mittal, acquired 97 MHz of spectrum to renew its expiring licences and also to bolster its mid-band spectrum holdings across select circles. Bharti Hexacom, a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel, acquired 15 MHz of airwaves for ₹1,001 crore.

Vodafone Idea picked up 50 MHz spectrum across low band and mid band series (900 MHz, 1800 MHz, and 2500 MHz) in as many as 11 circles.

Reliance Jio acquired additional spectrum in the 1800 MHz band in Bihar and West Bengal. The radiowaves on offer carry voice and data signals for mobile phones.

"Spectrum auction 2024 was part of a continuous allocation process... TSPs have taken spectrum not only for continuity of service but for expanding their services but the volume is limited because already a large part of the spectrum required was auctioned only last year," said Union telecom minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

BIG TIE

MEN IN BLUE SEEK T20 WC FINAL BERTH

The Rohit Sharma-led side will take on England, the defending champions against whom they lost in 2022 T20 World Cup semifinals, in Guyana. A win on Thursday will take India to their first T20 WC final since 2014 | P15

4 of family die in wall collapse near M'luru

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mangaluru

FOUR people, including two children, of a family died when a retaining wall collapsed on their house at Madani Nagar in Kuthar near Mangaluru on Wednesday morning.

The deceased have been identified as Yaseer, 42, his wife Mariyam, 40, and their daughters Rifana, 16, and Riyan, 14.

The retaining wall collapsed on Yaseer's house following heavy rain in Kuthar and surrounding areas. Although some people rushed to the spot after hearing a loud noise when the wall collapsed on the house, they could not rescue Yaseer and his family members. Their bodies were recovered from the rubble after a three-hour rescue operation. The narrow road to the locality hampered the rescue operation as firetenders and earthmoving vehicles could not reach the spot on time.

Yaseer's eldest daughter Rasheena, who is married, returned to her husband's house in Kerala on Tuesday. She had come to her parents' house at Kuthar for Bakrid.

The last rites were conducted in the evening after Rasheena arrived from Kerala. An employee at the fishing harbour in Mangaluru, Yaseer and his family shifted to Kuthar six months ago.

Assembly Speaker and local MLA UT Khader, deputy commissioner Mullai Muhilan MP, and zilla panchayat CEO Dr Anand visited the spot.

Assembly Speaker UT Khader and officials visit Madani Nagar on Wednesday | EXPRESS

DENGUE OUTBREAK

BBMP's door-to-door survey starts from Friday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

WITH the number of dengue cases increasing in Bengaluru, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has decided to conduct a door-to-door survey to identify people suffering from the viral disease and spread awareness against it from Friday.

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath told reporters that "source reduction activity" will be taken up near 14 lakh vulnerable houses. ASHA and NSS volunteers, and nursing students will take part in the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activity.

He said as over 1,200 dengue positive cases have been reported, a block will be created for 1,000 households. Health inspectors, ASHA workers, auxiliary nurses & midwives, and link workers in their respective zones will conduct the survey.

He said the officials have been instructed to conduct the survey in all zones. If the officials find suspected dengue cases, they will be sent to the nearest primary health centres for tests. He said the palike officials have been instructed to target mosquito-breeding places. The palike will come up with a micro-plan for all the zones. NS1 test kit will be used to test people suffering from fever. Blood samples will be collected and sent to laboratories for further tests. "Of the 28 lakh houses in BBMP limits, 14 lakh are in vulnerable places. They will be visited once in 15 days to raise awareness against dengue," he said.

SI gets notice for letting Pavithra wear makeup

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

SENIOR police officers have issued a notice to a woman police sub-inspector (WSPI) attached to the Vijayanagar police station for letting Pavithra Gowda, accused No 1 in Renukaswamy murder case, wear makeup when she was taken to her house for mahazar.

Pavithra is said to have asked the sub-inspector to allow her to use the washroom in her house.

When she came out, she was seen wearing lipstick and other cosmetics.

The notice has been issued to the woman officer for allowing the accused to wear makeup while in police custody. The SI along with other women personnel took Pavithra to her house on Kenchanahalli Road in Rajarajeshwari Nagar on June 15 for mahazar.

The police had recovered her clothes and footwear with which she reportedly assaulted Renukaswamy at the Pattanagere shed in RR Nagar on June 8. CONTINUED ON: P5

FREEDOM HUG

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange meets his wife Stella after landing at Canberra, Australia, on Wednesday. He was freed under a US plea bargain deal | AP | P12

EXPRESS READ

Hotel owners say won't hike coffee, tea prices

Bengaluru: Hoteliers in Bengaluru will not increase the prices of coffee and tea despite the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) announcing a hike in milk prices. Bruhat Bengaluru Hotels and Restaurants' Association president PC Rao said, "We will purchase less milk. For instance, if a hotel was purchasing 100 litres, it will now purchase only 95 litres. The additional cost will not be passed on to consumers." | P2

3 suspected JeM terrorists killed in gunfight in J&K

JAMMU: Three terrorists, suspected to be affiliated with the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), were killed in a gunfight that lasted for more than six hours in a forest area in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmiron Wednesday. A policeman was also injured in the gunfight that broke out in Bajaad village in the Gandoh area around 9.50 am. The terrorists believed to have recently infiltrated from across the border, police sources said | P10

Delhi court sends Kejriwal to 3-day CBI custody

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was on Wednesday sent to three-day CBI custody by a local court after his arrest by the central probe agency in the excise policy case.

The CBI, which produced Kejriwal in Rouse Avenue Court, sought five-day remand to interrogate him in the case, but Judge Amitabh Rawat ordered three days of custody. Kejriwal is in Tihar Jail over his alleged involvement in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped liquor policy. The Enforcement Directorate had arrested him on March 21.

After serving a production warrant late on Tuesday night, the CBI on Wednesday sought the court's permission before formally arresting him in the case. There was high drama during the hearing in the courtroom, with Kejriwal himself addressing the court and saying he and other AAP leaders, including Manish Sisodia, were innocent. "I am innocent, my lord," he told the judge. Rejecting the CBI's plea that he had blamed Sisodia for the alleged scam, Kejriwal claimed that the central probe agency's objective was to ensure that headlines in the media are manipulated.

CBI officials leave Rouse Avenue Court with Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal | PTI

Senior advocate Vikram Chaudhari, appearing for Kejriwal, submitted that the CBI has been acting in a biased manner. Chaudhari alleged that the CBI didn't give any notice to Kejriwal and said the timing of his arrest shows it was illegal. CBI's lawyer DP Singh said the liquor policy was revamped at the behest of the 'South Group' during the pandemic. "What was the need of this," Singh wondered and sought the CM's custody, saying he needed to be confronted with other accused.

B'luru cops raise special canine unit to sniff out 'synthetic drugs'

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

TO combat drug trafficking effectively, the city police have trained one of their dog squads to detect "synthetic drugs" such as MDMA, LSD, and ecstasy pills, which are commonly used in rave parties.

Earlier, the dogs were only trained to sniff common drugs such as ganja and charas. However, they have now been trained to sniff around 10 "synthetic drugs", according to officials of this special unit of six dogs.

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda told TNIE that the unit has been specially trained to detect "synthetic drugs". "These highly-skilled canines help in search and seizure operations, particularly at rave parties and at the hideouts of drug peddlers," he said.

PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

These dogs will also be used during search operations at the warehouses of courier companies and in buses and trains, he said.

A source said these dogs helped the police team that raided a rave party in Electronics City recently. At least 86 people tested positive for use of drugs during the raid.

Dayananda said the officials in-charge of the narcotic canine squad are keen on training all dogs in the department in detecting "synthetic drugs".

The squad has various breeds, including German Shepherd and Belgian Malinois. The dogs were trained for two months in sniffing "synthetic drugs". Samples of drugs are hidden in boxes, bags or concealed in luggages for these dogs to detect during their training.

Lakshmikanth, inspector of the dog squad, said, "The dogs have been trained to sniff drugs from distances up to 50 metres. This helps us catch the suspects before they try to escape."

After detecting the drugs, some dogs wag their tail while others bark, or scratch the surface to indicate the presence of drugs, he said.